



Tuesday 7 April 2015

Final races find NZ Optimist Champions

In a dramatic last day in the Toyota New Zealand Optimist National Championships, overnight leader Sam Bacon of Worser Bay got off to a shaky start with a 10th and a 9th place in the day's first two races, then stormed back to score a first and a second. His hard work was just enough to hold on to his overall lead by two points.

Visiting New South Wales champion, Otto Henry (Wollahara YC) sailed consistently all day and won the day's last race, take second place overall ahead of Sebastian Lardies and Sam Morgan (both (Kohimarama, Auckland).

Twelve races were needed to find the 2015 Toyota New Zealand Optimist Dinghy champions. 200 young sailors from Australia, New Caledonia, Tahiti and around New Zealand tested the windy waters of Wellington's Worser Bay over 5 days this Easter.

The fastest girls were Ashleigh Swadling from Queensland's Southport YC and Alice Haslett from Auckland's Wakatere Boating Club. In the Green Fleet, Emilie Bouchet of Nouméa built up a steady lead over the weekend to stay ahead of Torbay's Charlie Loughran. The best-placed 12 year old was Will Wright, from the host Worser Bay Boating Club, who finished 26th overall in the 200-strong fleet.

"Wellington's famous winds have given us a wild ride this Easter", said Regatta Director Belinda Stanley. "All the sailors, who range in age from 15 to 8 years old, have had to cope with winds from light southerlies right through to 30 knot northerlies".

The Toyota NZ Optimist National Championships are the starting point for many well-known New Zealand sailors. Past winners include world Optimist champion Chris Steele and new America's Cup helm Peter Burling.

200 sailors and their families travelled to Wellington for the 2015 competition. "It was especially pleasing to have 50 entries in the Green fleet, with sailors as young as 8 competing in their first national championships. This level of dedication and enthusiasm is what makes sailing such a popular New Zealand sport", said Angus Haslett, outgoing NZ International Optimist Dinghy Association president.

The 24 leading sailors have been offered places in the New Zealand travelling teams for regattas in Europe, North America, Asia, and the World Championships in Poland.

"We hope that this will be the start of an exciting international sailing career for many of these sailors", said newly elected NZ International Optimist Dinghy Association president Glenn Stanley. "We thank all our sponsors, especially Toyota New Zealand, for helping to make this regatta possible. For all of the





sailors, it's been a great introduction to a lifetime of boating adventures around New Zealand".

Contacts:

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Results: www.optimistnationals.org.nz

www.facebook.com/WorserBayBoatingClub

All photos: Chris Coad Photography

1 Sam Bacon, 2015 Toyota NZIODA National Champion, bailing as he works his way to windward in Race 2

3 Otto Henry (Woollahra SC), 2nd overall at the Toyota NZIODA National Championships

4 Fleet racing 2, NZIODA championships day 2

5 Open Fleet sailors surfing past the InterIslander Ferry

